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C O N F I D E N T I A L TBILISI 003194

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: COUNTERFEITING, ARRESTS, ABDUCTIONS IN SOUTH OSSETIA

REF: A. CATIPON - KASANOF EMAIL

[B](#). DECEMBER 6

[C](#). 2005

Classified By: Classified By: DCM Mark X. Perry, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On December 5, the Georgian government orchestrated a sting operation against a counterfeiting operation in the breakaway region of South Ossetia, resulting in the wounding and arrest of an Ossetian law enforcement official allegedly involved in the illegal activity. The operation, which was carried out by the Georgian Ministry of Defense inside the South Ossetian zone of conflict was met by reprisal arrests by South Ossetian officials of Georgian police and civilians, which themselves were met by further counter-reprisals against South Ossetians. Tensions have lessened following the release on December 7 of all those arrested by both sides, with the exception of the original South Ossetian individual accused of involvement in counterfeiting, who remains hospitalized in the Georgian city of Gori. An independent television crew appears to have been present during the December 5 sting operation. End Summary.

Georgian sting operation nabs alleged counterfeiter

[1](#)2. (C) On the night of December 5-6, Georgian Ministry of Defense Military Police performed a sting operation to arrest two South Ossetians believed to be involved in a large USD counterfeiting operation. The incident took place near the village of Ergneti, within the zone of conflict. The Georgians shot and wounded (non-life threatening) Viacheslav Kudziev, Deputy Police Chief of the South Ossetian Village of Artseli. According to press reports, Kudziev was carrying a large amount of counterfeit USD (Note: USSS Special Agent Jason Andrise, who is in Tbilisi to work on the counterfeiting case, confirmed the confiscation of \$15,550 of fake notes. End note). The other Ossetian escaped and Kudziev was taken to a hospital in Gori. According to OSCE, Kudziev had participated in an OSCE-sponsored working group the week of November 30 in Gori, where the Georgian MoIA gave a verbal promise not to harass or target participants as a result of their participation in the working group.

[1](#)3. (C) According to news reports and OSCE contacts, the Georgian Military Police assaulted members of a Mzed television crew who were on the scene and had filmed the shoot-out between the Georgian and Ossetian sides. OSCE Security Officer Noah Lane said the TV crew was there filming a general report on South Ossetia when the incident happened. Local witnesses told OSCE military observers that the MPs had "roughed up" the crew and confiscated their camera.

Reciprocal abductions between Georgia, South Ossetia

[1](#)4. (U) On December 6, Georgian press reported that South Ossetian officials detained approximately twenty ethnic Georgians, including four policemen. Georgian Minister of Interior Vano Merabishvili issued a statement calling on the South Ossetian authorities to release the "hostages". Also on December 6, OSCE observers in Tskhinvali reported that at approximately 4:30 p.m. local time Georgian officials arrested or detained four Ossetian officials. Merabishvili later denied Georgian involvement in the incident, saying that the Georgians were "ready to help Tskhinvali colleagues to collect information about the missing people."

[1](#)5. (C) On December 7, the DCM spoke with George Volski, Deputy Minister of Conflict Resolution, who said that all detainees on both the Georgian and South Ossetian side have been released. Viacheslav Kudziev is still being held, under MoIA custody. Volski said that his office has no answer as to why MoD rather than MoIA was involved in the sting operation.

TEFFT